

To: Education Committee
From: Mary Ann Woirhaye
Proponent of HB2485

Hello, Mr. Chairman and the members of the Education Committee.

My name is Mary Ann Woirhaye. I would like to thank Representative Tarwater for introducing this important piece of legislation and would like to offer my testimony in support of the Safe Bussing Act.

I am the proud mother of 2 children, ages 8 and 10. My husband and I make our home in the south end of Johnson County where the suburbs meet rural farmlands. We live in an idyllic setting where kids run between houses and knock on back doors to play. In the Fall of 2017, our school district opened the doors to a brand-new elementary school. Our small neighborhood of 100 houses was slated to attend the new school. While we lived more than 2.5 miles from our old school and received bus service, we were surprised to learn that we would now have to provide our own transportation or pay an additional \$600 for safe bussing to our new school. You see, our house is located 2.25 miles from the new school, just under the state minimum of 2.5 miles. To complicate matters further, the new school was built along a fast, heavily traveled, 2 lane road. Less than a mile from US Highway 69, the school is situated along a major thoroughfare used by

large trucks to access the highway. There are deep ditches, no sidewalks and no crosswalks. *Simply stated, my children do not have a safe way to self-commute to school.*

A recent audit of State transportation dollars revealed that the school district actually received funding for the school bus. The bus, which was already commissioned to pick up riders living further than 2.5 miles, passes my doorstep daily. Yet, I was asked to personally incur an expense of nearly \$600 to bus my 2 children to school. This Safe Bussing Act offers a common-sense solution and demonstrates to your constituents of Kansas that the safety of our children is paramount. You cannot compromise the safety of children.

Over the course of our careers (my husband in defense and space and myself in public health and higher education) we have had the opportunity to live and work in other states. What drew us back to our home state, and what ultimately led us to decide Kansas is where we want to stay, is our kids. Our kids have the opportunity to receive the highest quality public education. One that is second-to-none. I thank this House Committee on Education for your tireless efforts to ensure that kids in Kansas receive a superior education and I offer my support for this opportunity “do the right thing” for their safety.